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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

2 March 1979

ALERT MEMORANDUM*

LEBANON

Christian militias and Syrian forces in Beirut seem to be headed for a new outbreak of heavy fighting within the next two months. This could lead to an Israeli-Syrian confrontation or a rekindling of the Lebanese civil war if the Palestinians and Muslim leftists are drawn into the fighting. [REDACTED]

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The mandate of the Syrian-dominated Arab Deterrent Force expires on 26 April. The last renewal six months ago triggered heavy fighting, and Christian militias are almost certain to increase attacks on the Syrians as the April deadline approaches.

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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] The United Arab Emirates' contingent in East Lebanon--the only other non-Syrian unit in the ADF--is likely to leave soon after the Saudis. The Sudanese contingent departed in early February. Once the ADF becomes a totally Syrian force, the Christians will be even more determined to end the Syrian presence. [REDACTED]

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As a result of Israeli aid, the Christians are better armed and probably better trained than they were last October. Bashir Jumayyil and other [REDACTED] Christian leaders are emboldened by their conviction that Israel will come to their aid if the militias suffer serious reverses. Warmer weather, too, will weaken one source of restraint--the reluctance of Christian leaders to risk major fighting while Christian refugees would be exposed to rigors of winter. The Syrians, as in the past, are likely to respond

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with heavy artillery, rocket, and mortar fire against the Christian-held areas of East Beirut and nearby villages in the traditional Christian heartland. []

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Once fighting begins in Beirut, there are a number of possible complications:

- The Israelis would probably feel compelled to intervene in at least limited form on behalf of the Christians, if the Christians' military position or morale seemed seriously threatened. []
- Syrian President Assad could come under increased pressure from the Syrian military to cease temporising and either go all out to defeat the Christians or pull Syrian forces out of Lebanon. []
- If West Beirut comes under fire, Palestinians and leftist Muslim militias there may decide to enter the fighting. []
- Militias in the Christian dominated enclaves along the Israeli border, already resentful of UN-backed efforts to increase governmental authority in southern Lebanon, could increase military harassment of Palestinian and leftist positions. []
- The fighting could spread to other areas of Lebanon, possibly leading to resumption of the Lebanese civil war or to an Israeli-Syrian confrontation. []

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There is a slim possibility that the Lebanese Government might make a renewed effort to grapple with the political and military problems confronting the country, and that this might lead the various factions to defer a resumption of fighting. In particular, a defense bill now before the Lebanese parliament would reduce the power of the Christian Army commander and increase the number of Muslims in military command positions. Were parliament to pass a credible version of such a bill and the government move to implement it, the Syrians might be willing to agree to President Sarkis' proposal that Lebanese units replace Syrian forces in some areas of East Beirut. With such a reduction of the Syrian role, the Christians might be willing to accept renewal of the ADF mandate. []

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1 March 1979

ALERT MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Security Council
SUBJECT : Iran

We believe there is a good possibility that the Bazargan Government may not survive the combined pressures posed by internal friction and a sustained external challenge from the left. Even if Bazargan is able to remain in office, there is little prospect that his government will be willing or able to develop effective cooperation with the US.


STANSFIELD TURNER

Attachment

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Iran

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1 March 1979

ALERT MEMORANDUM*

The government of Prime Minister Bazargan is not in effective control of Iran, despite some progress in restoring economic activity. His government has not succeeded in restoring law and order, is beset by political divisions in its own ranks, is troubled by nascent autonomy movements in Kordestan and Azarbaijan and is facing a severe challenge from heavily armed and committed leftists. Bazargan's ability to cope with these problems is limited by the collapse of the military and security forces and the eroding loyalty of the revolution's paramilitary forces, the Mujahadin. Bazargan's problems may be increased now that Ayatollah Khomeini has left Tehran for Qom and has removed himself from the day-to-day conduct of governmental affairs. ☐

We believe there is a good possibility that the Bazargan government may not survive the combined pressures posed by internal friction and a sustained challenge from the left. Even if Bazargan is able to remain in office, he probably will have to continue to make far-reaching concessions to the left in order to retain power. There is also the possibility that the Prime Minister may be overthrown by more radical members in or outside of his own government, and there is potential for civil war if he decides to challenge the left militarily. ☐

Given the likelihood of prolonged instability in Iran, there is little prospect that the Bazargan government will be able or willing to develop effective cooperation with the

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US. The government will be preoccupied with its own survival and maintaining the country's national cohesion; its reliability as an oil exporter will be in doubt. []

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While the Soviets have maintained a cautious and conciliatory line toward Bazargan in most respects thus far, []

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[] Moscow is likely to increase efforts to broaden its contacts among the leftist factions while gradually becoming more open in support for Tudeh's claim to a role in the new power alignment. Should the situation degenerate into open civil war, the Soviets are likely to funnel covert support to those elements that then appear most favorable to their interests, while professing nonintervention and continuing to warn the US against intervention. []

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